

The Rev. Michael J. Bridge  
Sermon- Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-50  
Sunday, July 30, 2017

## Two parables on value

1. *Tell story about my father cleaning out Florence's basement and finding a Civil War era rifle. He immediately understood the value. Florence wanted him to take it, but, knowing its value, he was uncomfortable doing so. She insisted, so he did.*
2. In the first of the two parables that we will look at, Jesus speaks of a man who finds a treasure hidden in a field. When he found it, he immediately understands its value, and he sells everything he has to procure the field.
  - a. <sup>44</sup>The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.
3. So, Jesus compares this instance to the kingdom of heaven. This man stumbled upon it. He wasn't necessarily looking for it. Even though he wasn't actively seeking it, he recognized that it was worth giving everything else up for.
4. In the second parable, the man *is* out looking for treasure. He is a merchant specifically seeking pearls.
  - a. <sup>45</sup>Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, <sup>46</sup>who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.
5. While there is, indeed a difference in the two parables- one stumbles on treasure he wasn't looking for, while the other is searching for treasure- there are also similarities.
6. In both cases, the kingdom is like the treasure which they found. Immediately upon finding it, each of the men realized that the kingdom was worth more than anything they had. They gave up *everything* to acquire the one thing.
7. In the case of the man who stumbles upon the treasure hidden in the field, this makes sense. He wasn't actively looking. He *happened* to find something completely wonderful. He was able to procure it for far less than it was worth, and he wasn't going to miss the opportunity.
8. The merchant looking for pearls, however, *is* out searching for treasure. He doesn't stumble upon a pearl unawares. Instead, while intentionally seeking pearls, he found one that was far greater than he ever imagined. As a merchant, his possessions- especially his pearls, were important to his livelihood. However, when he found this pearl of great value, he parted with everything else to have it,
9. Obviously, there are two spiritual stories to tell here. First, we might think of the man who stumbled upon treasure as one who wasn't seeking any sort of religion or spiritual life. When he found it, he was blown away.
  - a. The gospel has that effect. The power of God's truth, and the reality of his kingdom, immediately strikes some people, who weren't even seeking it, and it radically changes their lives.
10. Then there are the kind of professional spiritual seekers. They have either tried every religion, or they have mixed and matched beliefs in order to build something more suitable and to their own liking.
  - a. Yet, again, the power and the truth of the gospel and the reality of God's kingdom is too overwhelming. This person lets go of all the other stuff he has been

collecting, because he realizes that the kingdom is infinitely more valuable, and worth giving everything for.

- b. This isn't surprising. The idea that I get to go to heaven as God's son, and co-heir of the kingdom with Jesus is far more valuable than the Buddhist idea of being absorbed into the cosmic soup at the end.

### What value do we place on the kingdom of heaven?

1. Of course, the big part that we shouldn't miss is that both men give up everything when they find the kingdom. Parables are picture stories, not allegories. We shouldn't read the "selling everything to purchase the treasure" concept as meaning that we buy our way into the kingdom. Instead, Jesus is making the point that the kingdom is so valuable, that it is worth forsaking all other possessions and pursuits for.
2. I think all that as Christians, we would all affirm this idea in principle. *We know* intellectually that the kingdom of heaven is the greatest pursuit, and the greatest thing we could ever attain to in life.
  - a. Yet we don't really live that way, do we?
  - b. The kingdom of heaven is the greatest pursuit... until our job requires more attention, and our pursuit of the kingdom falls away or suffers.
  - c. The kingdom of heaven is the greatest pursuit... until we find some recreational activity that interferes, and our pursuit of the kingdom falls away or suffers.
  - d. The kingdom of heaven is the greatest pursuit... until our friends, or our social circles don't approve, and our pursuit of the kingdom falls away or suffers.
  - e. And on, and on, and on...
3. There is a question that each of us must ask ourselves. We have to be honest with ourselves. It isn't a test, and you don't have to share the answer with anyone else if you don't want to. But we each need to ask ourselves if we truly value the kingdom of heaven above all else, and if we have genuinely pursued it with all that we have?
  - a. I know that if I am honest with myself, the answer to that is no. I also know that I am a son of God, saved by grace, awaiting my share in Christ's resurrection and my inheritance in his kingdom. And I know that the kingdom is still mine, even though I often fail to value it as much as I should.
  - b. In such times as I think about this fact in my life, I need to submit to prayer and ask God to continue his work of refining me and conforming me to the image of his Son, so that I can value his kingdom more and more.
4. So facing the truth about how much we value the kingdom on a daily basis isn't about making ourselves feel bad, but about helping us to turn to God in prayer, asking him that by the power of his Spirit, we would value the kingdom- that kingdom which we received for free because Jesus himself gave up everything in order to buy it for us.